

Introduction: Jesus frequently used parables as a teaching tool. Parables are often referred to as “earthly stories” with a “heavenly message.” In the next lesson we will look at different types of parables and how parables differ from related forms like proverbs and allegories. Today we will consider one parable whose message is of vital importance to every person.

Commentaries Referred To: **Windows on the Parables**, Warren W. Wiersbe, Victor Books, 1985, 11th Printing. **The Parables of the Kingdom**, John MacArthur, Moody Press, 1985.

Two Builders (Luke 6:46-49): In this parable the spiritual issue of concern is the vital importance of building a strong life-foundation. Jesus illustrates this spiritual issue by the physical picture of two different builders making choices as they build houses in an area possibly subject to flooding. There are rules they should follow. Both builders know the rules. But only one builder puts the rules into practice.

Jesus introduces this parable saying, *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice.”*

There is great value in hearing, understanding, and putting Jesus’ words into practice. Jesus follows His comment with a parable about two builders. They are building houses in a dry streambed. The foundation of a house is unseen but vital to its ability to stand firm in bad weather. The same is true for the foundation of a life. How firm is our foundation?

Of the many dry streambeds in the area, some had been dry for years, others carried water every rainy season. Builders avoided rainy season streambeds. But streambeds which had been dry for years were another issue. Such places often had broad smooth areas easy to build on. The temptation to build there was great. It was both faster and cheaper. Expenses could be focused on desirable features that were attractive to potential house owners.

Many, if not most, houses in that area were built of dried mud bricks. We read of such houses in Mt 6:19 where thieves dug through the walls of a house. Likewise, in Mk 2:3-4, four men dug through the roof of a house in order to let their paralyzed friend down into Jesus’ presence. Houses built of mud bricks obviously need to be protected from too much water and especially from running water.

One builder chose the easy way of building directly on the smooth surface formed by the mixture of sand and gravel of the old streambed. It was a great “good weather” house with lots of desirable features. The other more cautious builder dug deep to the bedrock, constructed a rock foundation sitting on the bedrock and rising several feet above the ground level. On that foundation he built his house. That was time-consuming and expensive.

In good weather and even during a normal rainy season both houses were fine. But a heavy storm was a potential big problem. You know the end of the story. A big storm came, and a torrent of water came down the formerly dry streambed. The torrent pounded on both houses. The house with the rock foundation withstood the pounding of the water, but the other collapsed.

Jesus says every person’s life is built on some foundation. Building a strong foundation can be difficult. When put into practice, Jesus’ words provide the necessary information to build a sturdy, lasting foundation. Strong foundations survive the severe storms of life. Weak foundations collapse. Paul reminds us in 1 Cor 3:11 that there is only one foundation for life capable of enduring life’s violent storms. That foundation is our Rock, Jesus Christ and His teachings.

The “Two Builders” parable divides people who hear Jesus into two classes. Both hear His teachings, but only one understands and puts them into practice. Putting Jesus’ words into practice is necessary in building a foundation which will endure the storms of life.

Comment from Matthew: Failure to put Jesus’ teachings into practice sets the stage for disaster. In Matthew 7:26-27 Jesus said, “*Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*” Disaster!

There can be no doubt about the meaning or significance of this parable. The question to each of us is on what foundation are we building our life? Only the Lord Jesus provides a foundation sure to endure.

Many people live lives to bring pleasure to themselves and to be admired by others. That ultimately produces a meaningless foundation.

Spurgeon: Spurgeon in his “On Laying Foundations,” speaks about people who claim Christ believing they can have the benefits of being a Christian without committing to live a life of obedience to Christ’s teachings.

You can't! Talking the talk of Christianity can be pleasant. Being a part of a Christian community can be rewarding. But the cost of walking in faith can be off putting. As Spurgeon said, *"The common temptation is, instead of really repenting, to talk about repentance; instead of heartily believing, to say 'I believe,' without believing; instead of truly loving, to talk of love without loving; instead of coming to Christ, to speak about coming to Christ, and profess to come to Christ, and yet not to come at all."*

In contrast, Jesus says, if you want life which will last through eternity, you must build on Him and practice His teachings.

Truth in a Hymn: A great hymn of the faith makes that point.

*"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."*

Biblical truth guards against thinking we can have Christ's benefits without having Christ and His teachings.

Why Call Me Lord, Lord? Jesus said, *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"* Unless one is "in Christ" it is impossible to be true to His moral teaching. Likewise, it is impossible to have Christ without His moral teaching. It's both or nothing!

Spurgeon makes a final point concerning two believers. One is diligent in obedience, the other is on-again, off-again, sloppy in obedience. Both have salvation, both will be in heaven, but the effect of mortal life's storms on the two will be quite different.

Both these believers at least are building on Christ. What of those who don't build on Christ at all, who don't even hear His words, because they will not? If anyone is more foolish than people who hear but will not diligently practice what

they learn, it is people who choose to not hear at all, those who build no shelter for their soul.

In Mt 7:21-23 Jesus says, “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*”²² *Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’*²³ *Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

Spurgeon says, “*There are tens of thousands to whom the preaching of the gospel is as music in the ears of a corpse. They shut their ears and will not hear, though the testimony be concerning God’s own Son, and life eternal, and the way to escape from everlasting wrath.*

To their own best interests, to that which is to their eternal benefit, men are dead; nothing will secure their attention to their God. To what, then, are these men like? They may fitly be compared to the man who built no house whatever and remained homeless by day and shelter less by night.

When worldly trouble comes like a storm those persons who will not hear the words of Jesus have no consolation to cheer them; when sickness comes, they have no joy of heart to sustain them under its pains; and when death, that most terrible of storms, beats upon them they feel its full fury, but they cannot find a hiding place.

They neglect the housing of their souls, and when the hurricane of almighty wrath shall break forth in the world to come, they will have no place of refuge. In vain will they call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the mountains to cover them. They shall be in that day without a shelter from the righteous wrath of the Most High.”

The message is clear. Build the house for your soul on the only foundation that will endure every storm, even the final storm of mortal death, and will carry you into eternity.

In James 1:22 he says, “***Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Hear the word with understanding and do what it says.***”

May the Lord bless each of us with understanding and willingness to be obedient to His word.

What is Next? Types of parables, their structure, and how they are used.